

Application No. 10/771,441
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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claim 1 in the application has been amended to specify that the reinforcing film is a cellulose acetate film with an underlying water based adhesive layer adhered to the paper support layer.

The claimed file folder is easily recycled in that the folder is primarily made from a paper substrate support layer in combination with a cellulose acetate film where the file folder may be recycled in the conventional manner of a paper substrate product. Furthermore, a water based adhesive is used to secure the cellulose acetate film to the paper support layer. Such a water based adhesive is straight forward to apply while also accommodating moisture exchange through the reinforcing film and simplified recycling of the product. Recycled paper is normally cut or broken into smaller strips or discrete pieces in preparation for recycling and this process will expose and provide better access to the water based adhesive layer which will then soften and allow the cellulose acetate film to separate.

With this particular combination, the file folder has increased durability due to the cellulose acetate film protecting the paper substrate during the useful life of the file folder. The water based adhesive, underlying the cellulose acetate film, maintains securement of the cellulose acetate film to the paper substrate while providing advantages when the file folder is recycled. As a file folder during the normal useful life thereof is likely to be exposed to water or other liquids, the use of a water based adhesive would be avoided due to possible damage or deterioration thereof. Such deterioration has not occurred in that the cellulose acetate film acts as an effective protective barrier.

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The cited combination of references do not operate on this basis and suggest a different combination should be used that would be more difficult to recycle. Furthermore, there is no appreciation in any of these references that the water based adhesive would work in this environment to provide effective securement and stability where the file folder would be exposed to liquid spills as discussed in the application.

The more common practice with protective films is a thermal adhesive or a solvent based adhesive and these adhesives are not as environmentally acceptable and do not have the advantages discussed in the application.

The third reference of Cilento et al (US Patent 4,427,737) discloses a microporous or breathable combination of a flexible tape and an underlying adhesive layer. The underlying adhesive layer is a solvent based adhesive layer preferably a pressure sensitive rubbery elastomer having dispersed therein water soluble or swellable hydrocolloids. This adhesive is used in combination with a polymeric substance such as an open mesh polyethylene or polypropylene. In column 1 of the reference, the suitable rubbery elastomers include "natural or synthetic viscous gum-like substances such natural rubber, silicone rubber, acrylonitrile rubber, polyurethane rubber, polyisobutylenes, etc. with a mixture of polyisobutylenes of a molecular weight of 5,000 to 11,700 and 81,000 to 99,000". These adhesives are not water based adhesives and would be difficult to recycle in the manner of a conventional paper product. The suggested adhesives themselves are not breathable and it is only the inclusion of hydrocolloids that render the layer breathable.

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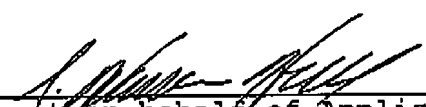
It is therefore submitted that the amended claims fully distinguish over the cited combination of Hicinbothem et al in view of Law et al and Cilento et al as applied to claims 1, 4, 5, 8, 31-37, 40 and 41.

The above three references were combined with Bohlman in rejecting claims 2, 3 38 and 39 as being obvious. For the above reasons, these claims are also believed to distinguish over the art.

Independent claim 31 has been combined with dependent claim 32 to restrict the recyclable file folder to the particular cellulose based reinforcing film in combination with the water based adhesive securing the film to the paper substrate. For the reasons stated above, this claim is believed to fully distinguish over the art.

Reconsideration and allowance of the application is requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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WH/jc